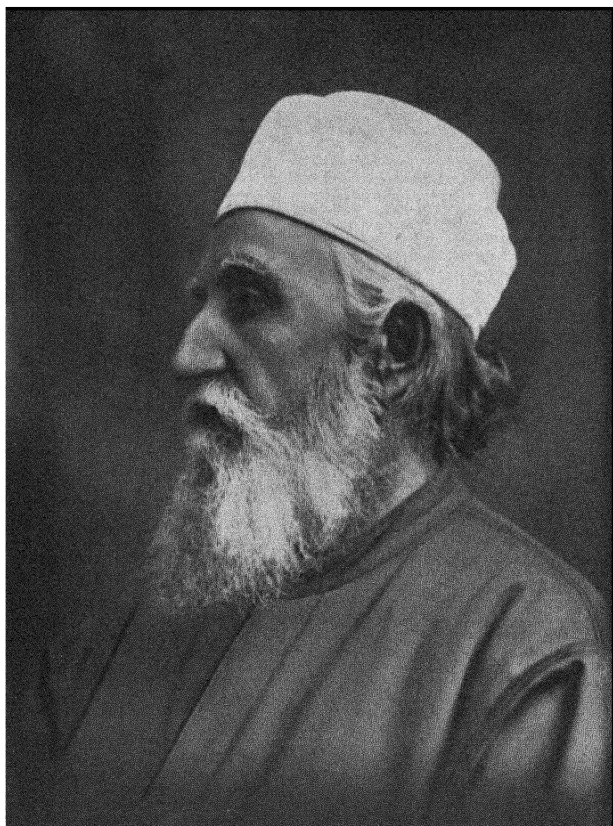


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THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM



ABDUL BAHÁ

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM

A Pageant Play
the plan for which was given by
ABDUL BAHA ABBAS
in London 17th January 1913

By **PARVINE**
(Mrs. Basil Hall)

LONDON :
THE WEARDALE PRESS LIMITED
1933

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I also thank my mother, Lady Blomfield, for her inspiration and help. My gratitude is further due to Mrs. Gabrielle Enthoven for her permission to use the Plan for the Drama, which was given to her by Abdul Baha Abbas.

The Drama of the Kingdom has been passed for publication by the London Spiritual Assembly, and by the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, also by the National Reviewing Committee, and the Publishing Committee of the United States and Canada.

PARVINE.

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MESSAGE TO THE LONDON BAHAIS
FOR THE DAY OF ABDUL BAHÁ

(Specially given to Mrs. Gabrielle Enthoven)

GOOD NEWS ! GOOD NEWS !
The doors of the Kingdom of God are open !
GOOD NEWS ! GOOD NEWS !
Armies of Angels are descending from Heaven !
GOOD NEWS ! GOOD NEWS !
The Sun of Truth is rising !
GOOD NEWS ! GOOD NEWS !
Heavenly food is being sent from above !
GOOD NEWS ! GOOD NEWS !
The Trumpet is sounding !
GOOD NEWS ! GOOD NEWS !
The Banner of the Great Peace is floating far and wide !
GOOD NEWS ! GOOD NEWS !
The Light of the Lamp of the Oneness of Humanity
is shining bright !
GOOD NEWS ! GOOD NEWS !
The Fire of the Love of God is blazing !
GOOD NEWS ! GOOD NEWS !
The Holy Spirit is being outpoured !
GOOD NEWS ! GOOD NEWS !
For Everlasting Life is here !
O Ye that sleep, Awake !
O Ye heedless ones, learn wisdom !
O Blind, receive your sight !
O Deaf, hear !
O Dumb, speak !
O Dead, Arise !

November 26th, 1911.

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM

FOREWORD

IN THE YEAR 1850, a youth of serene beauty and grace, who walked like a prince, and whose clear eyes shone with gentle authority, faced a firing party in the citadel of Tabriz, and died for his faith. This was Sayyid Ali Muhammed of Shiraz, called " Bab-ed-Din " (" Gate of the Faith ") more generally known as " the Bab ".

His crime had been to outrage orthodox Islam by proclaiming the imminent coming of " One Whom God should make manifest to this Age ". The Mullah hierarchy were alarmed when the movement which they imagined to have been strangled by the execution at Tabriz arose with new vigour in the person of Hussein Ali Nuri, a nobleman of Teheran, famed for his wisdom and charity, who was afterwards acclaimed as the promised Manifestation. His followers called him " Baha'u'llah " (" The Splendour of God ").

The combined forces of Church and State drove the new Leader from his native land, and delivered him into the hands of the Turkish Government. After suffering privation and indignity in various prisons, he and his family were finally sent, in 1868, to the penal fortress of Akka in Palestine, where in 1892 Baha'u'llah died. He had spent the years of his captivity in writing the books which now form the foundation of the Bahai scriptures.

In 1908 the Young Turk Party liberated the eldest son of the Prophet, known in Palestine as Abbas Effendi, and to the world as Abdul Baha (" The Servant of God "). Taking immediate advantage of his liberty, Abdul Baha travelled through Europe and America giving his father's message.

" I do not desire that a man should change his religion," said Abdul Baha, " rather do I desire that his religion should change him." Baha'u'llah said : " Let not a man

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glory in this : that he loves his country ; let him rather glory in this : that he loves his kind."

A follower of Baha'u'llah, if he be a Christian, must not forsake Christ ; he must enrich his Christianity by practising the teaching. He must also enlarge his conception of God by venerating divine inspiration in the prophets of every other religion which has had a part in the moral and intellectual civilisation of the human race.

The two main principles of the Bahai faith are these : The Unity of Mankind, and the spiritual continuity of religion through Divine Manifestations of the One God throughout the ages. From this it follows that all prejudices, whether of creed, race, sex, or class, should be abolished, and that arbitration should supersede war, for there is no place for an enemy in the united human family.

Bahatism, therefore, is not so much a new religion, as Religion restated and quickened. It may be called " new ", perhaps, in the sense that a star is called " new ", because its light has only reached us to-day. The light which is reflected by the Bahai Revelation is the same as that which was reflected by the divine Messengers of the past.

It was during Abdul Baha's visit to London in 1913, that he said to one whom he called " Hamsayeh " (Neighbour) : " I will give you a play. It shall be called **THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM** ".

The circle of friends, who were gathered round him that evening, held a tense silence, while, in his deep, sonorous voice, Abdul Baha unfolded the pageant of his sublime imagination thus :

*" The Herald of the Kingdom stands before the people. Wonderful music swells from an unseen orchestra, moving and soul-inspiring. The music becomes soft, while the Herald proclaims the coming of the Kingdom. He holds a trumpet to his mouth.

" The curtain rises. The stage is crowded with men and

*The above are the words of Abdul Baha Abbas, translated by Ahmad Sohrab, and taken down by Parvine as they were spoken.

FOREWORD

women. All are asleep. At the sound of the trumpet they begin to awake.

"Suddenly the music breaks forth. The people hear and wonder. They rise and question one another, saying: 'What is this? Whence comes this music?' Some return to their occupations, unheeding. First a few talk together, then one ceases his work, and proceeds to make enquiries. A merchant, leaving his stall, comes to ask the meaning of the eager group. A soldier, who is practising arms, withdraws from his comrades and joins those who are wondering.

"Here, a banker is seen counting his money, his attention is attracted. He pauses in his calculation, and asks: 'What is the news?'

"There are seen dancers and others holding revelry. Some of them come forth and ask the news, questioning the Herald.

"Now those who come to ask are more or less divided into the following groups. First those who, having heard of the Coming of the Promised One, frown and shrug their shoulders, returning to their work, scoffing and disbelieving. The second type are those who hear the music, strain their ears to catch the meaning of the Message, and their eyes to discern the Mystery.

"The blind receive their sight, the deaf their hearing, and those who were dead arise and walk, still wrapped in the garments of death.

"Then there are those who will not believe until they have had signs revealed to them, who crave for proof, saying: 'But we want to see the earthquake. If the Promised One is indeed come, the sun should not give his light, the moon should be darkened, and the stars should fall. We await our Promised One till these signs be fulfilled. We expect to see him descend from heaven in clouds of great glory.'

"Those who believe shout: 'The Promised One has come!'

"Those who doubt cry: 'What proof is there? Show us a proof!'

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"They who understand explain: 'Whence did Christ come? He came from heaven, though they who scoffed at Him said: 'We know this man, he comes from Nazareth.' This is the real meaning: His spirit came from heaven, while His body was born of an earthly mother. As it was then, so is it with the Second Coming.

"'But we await the signs', say the doubting ones. How, otherwise, shall we know? The earth must shake, the mountains be rent asunder. The Promised One shall conquer the East and the West.'

"One arises and tells the people that these signs did not come outwardly, nor will they again. Those who look with the eyes of Truth shall see that these portents are of the Spirit.

"The Eternal Sovereignty descends from heaven, the body is of the earth. The mountains are men of high renown, whose famous names sink into insignificance, when the dawn of the Manifestation fills the world with light. The pomp of Annas and Caiaphas is outshone by the simple glory of the Christ. The earthquake is the wave of spiritual life, that moves through all living things and makes creation quiver.

"The prophecies of the Coming of Christ were mystical. The prophecies concerning the Second Coming are also mystical. The earthquakes and unrest, the darkening of the sun and moon, the falling of the stars—all these foretell the humiliation of those whom the world considers great. Theologians wrapped in blind traditions, the bigots and the hypocrites: such will fall.

"Now these sayings will be divided between different people, altogether forming a conversation, questions, answers, exclamations of wonder, and so forth.

"Now a procession passes. The Pageant of the World. Grand nobles and kings, high priests and dignitaries of the Churches, jewelled and gorgeously dressed. They look with scorn on those who believe, saying: 'Why should we leave our ancient religions?' They look like devils of malice and oppression. Yet each is miserable. One falls, the others pass on. One is dying, the others take no heed.

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Another breathes his last. They do not stop by the way.

"The poor who have believed look on sadly.

"The scene changes. A banquet hall. The table is spread with all delicious foods. The orchestra is playing heavenly music. The lights become gradually more brilliant, until the whole hall is shining. Round the table sit the very poor in torn garments. An Oracle arises and cries : 'The Kingdom of God is like a feast ! Remember what Christ said ! Here we see the Kingdom ! The greatest and the worldly wise are not here, but the poor are here !'

Each sings from the joy of his heart, and there is great rejoicing. Some dance, one plays the flute, everyone is radiantly happy. Someone addresses the people. While this man is speaking they say : 'Hear him ! Hear his eloquence ! We know him. He was poor and ignorant, and now he is wise !' And so they wonder and question one another. A woman rises and speaks, laughing and happy. The people are surprised, saying : 'But what has happened ? Yesterday this woman was sad, and angry. Her heart was full of sorrow and disappointment. Why is she so joyous ?'

"A man enters with a sack of gold and begins to offer it to the people, but they refuse, one saying : 'I am rich, I do not need your gold' 'Nor I.' 'Nor I.' The man with the gold is surprised and says . 'We know you are poor and starving. Why do you not accept my gold ?'

"Then a teacher comes and speaks on a high plane of philosophy and science. All those who listen wonder, for he had been ignorant and accounted of no importance. How is he now so learned ?

"Another comes with shining eyes, gazing with joy on the beautiful surroundings. The people wonder and say : 'How is this ? Yesterday he was blind.'

"Another hears beautiful music and he tells the people that a few hours ago he was deaf to all sound.

"A miracle ! A miracle ! Here is one who was dead, and now he is walking before us !'

"One arises and says : 'You know the cause of these

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miracles? It is the Heavenly food! Everlasting life is for him who partakes of it.'

"When the people hear this they shout with one will: 'Glad tidings! Glad tidings! Glad tidings!'

"Each one is supremely happy. They sing an Alleluia.

" 'O God, we were poor, Thou hast made us rich!
We were hungry, Thou hast made us satisfied!
Athirst were we, and Thou hast given us the Water
of Life!

Our eyes were blinded, Thou hast given us sight!
We were dead, Thou hast given unto us Life Eternal!
We were of the earth, Thou hast made us the children
of Heaven!

We were outcasts, Thou hast made us beloved!
We were helpless, Thou hast made us powerful!
We praise Thee, O Lord!

"After this song, glorious diadems descend from Heaven and rest on each head. They shine with the radiance of Heavenly jewels. All wonder and ask questions. One arises and says: 'These are the crowns of the Kingdom! Ye are all Heavenly rulers! Ye shall have eternal dominion! Ye shall have everlasting glory! The illumination of the Spirit is yours. God hath chosen you for His service!' They take their crowns and kiss them, and again place them on their heads.

"Then they begin to pray and supplicate:

" 'O God! O Almighty!

" 'We give Thee thanks for these proofs of Thy bounty! Thou hast given us Life! Make us faithful, so that the fire of Thy Love may fill our hearts, that Thy Light may illumine our faces! Suffer us to be firm unto Christ, Who gave up His life for us!'

"The curtain falls.

"In the last scene one of those who believe is taken by the persecutors. 'We mean to kill you', they say. 'I am ready. I am happy', he answers. With hands raised to Heaven, he cries: 'O God, make me ready!' Then he gives himself up to death. Another is taken, and dies praising God and His mercy to mankind.

FOREWORD

"The third is a beautiful girl in a white garment, wearing a heavenly crown upon her head. Everyone gazes at her in wonder. She is seated, apart. A messenger comes from the king with an offer of great riches if she will but give up the Cause which she has embraced. She answers: 'I have not accepted this Cause blindly through tradition. I have seen Reality with mine own eyes. The Truth is in my heart. How should I renounce my faith thus lightly?'

"Her father comes and entreats her to give up her faith. She answers: 'Can you say there is no sun, when you have seen the light? I have seen the sun. You are blind. Awake! The sun is shining! Awake!'

"Another messenger comes. This time from a great prince who wishes to wed her on condition that she gives up her Faith.

" 'I know no prince save God. I will not close mine eyes to the glory of the King of Kings!'

"They bring her jewels and an earthly crown. 'Take these!' they say.

" 'These to me are so many pebbles. The jewels I treasure are the jewels of the Knowledge of God. Those earthly stones may be broken or lost. Behold my crown! These are eternal gems! For those earthly stones that are doomed to perish, shall I give up this everlasting diadem?'

"They say: 'We shall imprison you.'

" 'I am ready.'

" 'We shall beat you.'

" 'I am ready.'

" 'You shall be killed.'

" 'Is that true? Do you mean it? Good news! Good news! For then I shall be free. My soul will escape like a bird at liberty from this earthly cage of my body. Then shall I be free. Now am I in chains. These bonds shall be broken. Kill me! Kill me!'

"They slay her. One after another is martyred. Their bodies are covered with shrouds, and after a great silence, people enter and lift the coverings in awe and reverence. They stand wondering, as lights appear and shine upwards

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from the prostrate forms. Some question as to the meaning of this. 'These are the spirits of those martyred ones, freed from their bodies. Now they enjoy eternal liberty. See, they ascend to the Kingdom!'

"Realising this, the people are wonderstruck and amazed. They cry: 'What bounty God has bestowed on them! They are so free and joyful! Now can they wing their way to the Sun of Reality! Their souls return to the Sun from which they came!'"

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PROLOGUE

THREE ARCHES form the background of the scene. Beyond is a substance which gives the impression of space and distance. Here, by varying lights is shown dawn, mid-day, or night, as the action demands. For an interior scene, curtains are hung in the archways. As the Prologue opens they are drawn aside.

A Burmese gong with a deep and melodious note is sounded three times to announce the beginning of the play.

Two students, one from the East and one from the West, enter by the side arches, advance slowly across the stage, and meet in the centre. As they pass one another, the Eastern student stands still for a moment, gazing at the Western Student, and holding out his hand to detain him in friendship. The Western, rather in preoccupation than in enmity, passes on to his place, unheeding. Sad, but not angry, the Eastern Student proceeds to his position on the Right of the stage.

The Student from the East carries a book bound in cloth of gold; the Student from the West holds a book bound in calf with metal clasps. Each wears the characteristic dress of his type; the first, a white robe with a brilliantly-coloured girdle, and an oriental head-dress; the second, an academic gown and scarlet hood. There is a high desk and stool seen on the left, a lectern on the right.* The Eastern stands on the right and the Western on the left of the stage, where they remain throughout the play.

EASTERN STUDENT. I am a student from the East.

WESTERN STUDENT. I come from the West.

EAST. The Mountain of God is radiant in the dawn!

*Some of the passages spoken by the Eastern Student are quotations from the Bhagavad Gita, the Bible, and the Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah. The Western Student sometimes reads from the works of eminent scientists of to-day.

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WEST. Steel girders tower to the sky ! Aircraft cleave the clouds like giant birds. This is Progress !

EAST. He is the Glory of the Most Glorious ! Be still, that ye may hear His Voice !

WEST. The air is filled with the roar of innumerable wheels !

EAST. [*opening his book*] Lift up your eyes ! Behold the Sun of My Manifestation is glorious in the east !

As the Eastern Student speaks he raises his head and addresses the audience directly. He keeps his finger on the page of his book. It is as if he knew the passages he speaks by heart. Occasionally he glances at the book. It is his authority.

The Western Student turns away from the Eastern, and sits at the desk, where he opens his book, and begins to turn the pages. His speech is jerky and business-like, and while the Eastern is speaking he ignores him, and remains pre-occupied.

WEST. The structure of civilisation depends upon the volume of trade. Industry is the foundation of life. Industry, industry, mechanised industry.

EAST. Mount Sinai hath heard My Voice,
And ancient Fuji Yama,
The supreme Altar of the Sun !

WEST. Great ships strike across the ocean !

EAST. From Hara have I spoken.
Mount Paran, in the stillness,
Hath heard My Voice !
In the silence of the stars !

WEST. Transcontinental expresses thunder through the night.

EAST. Know that I dwell within.
In the quiet time shalt thou hear Me ;
In the hour which is tranquil and serene.

PROLOGUE

WEST. Power, production, profit ! Power ! Production !
Profit ! Speed and efficiency ! Speed and efficiency !
Speed and efficiency !

EAST. There is peace on My holy mountain. From My
throne I contemplate Eternity !

WEST. We get our ounce of energy for every penny paid.
We get our ounce of energy for every penny paid !
Energy ! Energy ! Energy !

EAST. From Carmel shall My Voice be heard !

WEST. Man has conquered Nature ! Man is the crown of
Evolution !

EAST. Time and Space are My dominion.
Yet beyond do I reign supreme !

WEST. [*taking his pen from the ink-horn*] We count, we
measure, we weigh, we classify, and correlate, classify,
and correlate. Everything, everything, we classify and
correlate !

EAST. I am Alpha and Omega,
The Beginning and the End !

WEST. Science has reduced the problems of the Universe
to mathematical formulae.

EAST. The Universe is My mantle,
The Earth My footstool !

WEST. From the stars in their courses to the atom,
Science observes all things ! Analysis and Synthesis !
Analysis and Synthesis ! Analysis and Synthesis !

EAST. Thus spake Lâou Tsé: "All things originate from
Tâou the Absolute. All things conform to Tâou the
Absolute ! And to Tâou do they, at last, return !"

WEST. Science annihilates Religion. The age of super-
stition is past.

EAST. "Brahma is the Beginning and the End. From
Brahma have all things come. To Brahma do they
return at last ! For Brahma is Creator and Created !"
Thus spake Krishna.

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WEST. The Churches are losing their power. Laboratories replace seminaries ; formal religion is dead !

EAST. The letter killeth. The Spirit giveth Life !

WEST. Religionists contend with one another over the dead bones of their creeds !

EAST. " I am the Light of the World ! I am the Vine, ye are the branches. As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you."

WEST. The cross has been used to inflame men's passions. Christians have shed blood, with the Holy Name upon their lips.

EAST. " Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain ! "

WEST. If there be a God, He has forsaken us !

EAST. [*reading*]

" When there is decay of Righteousness
And there is exaltation of unrighteousness
Then I, Myself, come forth. For the protection of
the Good,
For the destruction of Evil.
I am born from age to age !
The foolish regard Me not, when clad in human
semblance,
Being ignorant of My supreme Nature, the Great
Lord of Being ! "

Enter the Herald of the Kingdom.

He comes through the centre arch, arrayed in colours of the dawn. He carries a golden trumpet, which he puts to his lips, and he plays a call of melodious sweetness and majesty. In his left hand he carries a torch aflame.

EAST. Behold the Herald of the Kingdom of God !

The Eastern prostrates himself; the Western looks up from his book in bewilderment.

PROLOGUE

Curtains fall behind the Herald, screening the opening of the arches and the part of the stage behind them.

HERALD. He is the Glory of the Most Glorious !

The Eastern, on his knees, raises the Holy Book above his head. The Herald touches it with the torch.

HERALD. " This is that which hath descended from the realm of glory, uttered by the Tongue of Power and of Might, and revealed unto the Prophets of old ! "

The Herald gives the torch to the Eastern Student, who places the Book on the lectern and raises the torch on high.

HERALD. Arise, O Student of the Eastern World ! Proclaim God's Messenger to this Age ! Baha'u'llah !

EAST. Praise be unto God the Most Glorious !

Eastern Student rises and holds high the torch.

HERALD. [*speaking to the Western Student*] The material civilisation of the West is but the body of Progress. Turn ye to the East where the soul ariseth in majesty and power ! God hath not left man comfortless ! The Dawns of His Manifestation are infinite ! The Divine Dynasty is immortal !

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ACT I

THE WORLD OF TO-DAY

SCENE: THE MARKET SQUARE OF A GREAT CITY

THE curtains behind the Herald divide, and the scene is illuminated. The Market Place is crowded with people of every description. All are asleep. A merchant slumbers at his stall, his hands clutching his money-bags. A banker dozes over his ledger. Soldiers sleep with their rifles beside them. A sentry droops at his post. There are revellers and princes, courtiers, lawyers and politicians, rabbis, priests, mullahs, Hindu swamis, professors, doctors, and university students. In the foreground are manual workers and men and women in rags. Among the revellers is a lady of great beauty. Near her reclines a woman of light character. The revellers, when they awake, divide their attentions between these two.

The Herald blows his trumpet four times, facing in turn the four points of the compass. With great dignity he passes through the sleeping throng, and leaves the scene by the centre arch, where he turns and blows a fifth call on his trumpet.

Thereafter a distant call is heard, faint and muffled as though it comes from the heart of a deep forest. The call echoes through the air and the sleepers stir in their slumber.

The First Follower of The Light, a young man in simple garments, rises and stands in an attitude of ecstatic realisation. The Eastern Student gives him the torch, extends his right hand above the young man's head and reads the following words from the book.

EASTERN STUDENT. *[reading]* "O Son of Man!

"Veiled in Mine immemorial Being and in the ancient eternity of Mine Essence, I knew My love for thee.

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therefore I created thee, upon thee I laid Mine Image,
And revealed unto thee My beauty !

“ O Son of Being !

“ Thou art My lamp ; My light is in thee ! ”

[*He closes the book, and indicates himself.*]

This humble student is withdrawn into the heart of contemplation. Thou art of the sphere of action. Thy place is in the cities and markets, and on the battlefields of the world. Thou hast heard the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Lift up thy voice and summon the peoples of the earth ! Spread the glad tidings in the courts and palaces of princes, in the parliaments and congregations of men, in the homes and the workshops, in the camps and villages, and in the churches and temples of the Most High !

FIRST FOLLOWER OF THE LIGHT. What great mission is this ? Can I believe that it is to me this task is given ? I am unworthy ! I am of no account. My name is unknown and my station lowly. I was born to serve !

EASTERN STUDENT. Then serve thou the Cause of God ! In His service, sparrows become eagles, jackals become lions, and slaves become leaders of men !

FIRST FOLLOWER. Who will hear my voice ?

EASTERN. Speak fearlessly and all men shall hear thee ! Be not afraid if some mock and revile thee. Thou hast the authority of God's Messenger for this Day ! Hold high the torch of Baha'u'llah, and call mankind to the standard of Unity and Truth !

FIRST FOLLOWER. Allah O Abha ! The divine fire is flowing through my veins ! Mine ears are filled with the music of the celestial choir ! Mine eyes are unveiled to the Glory ! Mine ignorance has become wisdom, and my weakness the power of the Spirit, immortal, invincible, triumphant !

[*He addresses the people.*]

O ye peoples of the Earth arise !

Ye are one !

There is one God Everlasting !
 Brahma, Jehovah, Allah are One !
 Truth is undivided !
 This is the Message of God's Prophet to this Day !
 All religions are rays from the same living Sun !
 All the Prophets are Messengers of God !

The sleepers are now awake and continuing their various activities. One by one, as the First Follower speaks, they stop to listen, not looking his way, but as though some powerful thought had, for a moment, interrupted their preoccupations.

FIRST FOLLOWER.

O ye nations of the world arise !
 Ye are one !
 Leaves of one branch !
 Branches of one tree !
 Children of One Father !
 God Who sent wise Lâou to the ancient East,
 Who revealed unto Krishna the wisdom of Heaven,
 Who gave Gautama the message of renunciation,
 Who sent Moses to the lawless tribes,
 Who gave Jesus to light the world,
 Who sent Mahmud to find the lost,
 God Who sendeth him I proclaim unto you now,
 His Prophet for this Day, Baha'u'llah !

The people question one another.

SECOND FOLLOWER OF THE LIGHT. He hath come !

THIRD. Behold the day of the Lord is at hand !

FOURTH. Man is risen to the full stature of Man !

FIFTH. The Kingdom of God is triumphant !

SIXTH. Hear the glad tidings ! Rejoice !

FIRST. [*moving among the people*]
 Gather in your millions !
 Uphold the standard of the Most High
 The Hosts of the Lord have arisen,

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To vanquish the Powers of Darkness !
Hail ye the Dawn of Regeneration !
Hail ye the Kingdom of God !

MERCHANT. Silence, maniac !

SOLDIER. What is the meaning of this ?

MERCHANT. [*drawing Soldier aside from the First Follower, who is being surrounded by the very poor*] Some ríad-man's game.

SOLDIER. I heard a voice like the sound of a bugle-call.

MERCHANT. Some strange disturbance awoke me. I am uneasy.

SOLDIER. Was I dreaming, or did the voice speak of Peace ?

FIRST. Peace on earth ! On earth as it is in Heaven !
Thy Will be done !

SOLDIER. Peace ? What is to become of me if there is no more war ?

FIRST. Instead of making war, O strong of limb and courageous of heart, you will be called upon to keep men at peace. It will become your task to restrain the savage instincts of the ignorant and unruly.

LAWYER. What is the meaning of this ? Can no one explain ? Some say it is a proclamation. Could there be a proclamation in this city without my knowledge ?

BANKER. What is this news ? The people are murmuring in wonder and fear. Is it some political change ? I have no news of it on my tape-machine. The market is good, the bank rate steady enough.

FIRST. This news is not political. This news cannot be read by those who fix their eyes on the tape-machine. Leave your counting for a while, and lift your eyes to the Dawn. The Promised One has come !

BANKER. The Promised One ?

A SEEKER AFTER THE TRUTH. O if only I could believe !
For so long have I held that Antichrist should come and

usurp the Power of God ! My great fear is that I should mistake the true Messiah for Antichrist, or Antichrist for the true Messiah !

FIRST. Wise men are assailed by doubts. Fear not. Examine this Revelation. Let the clear and ruthless light of Reason be shed upon its mysteries. By that which is highest in you shall the Truth be proved. I doubted, but now the divine judgment of the intellect has confirmed my belief. Not faith alone, but fact ; not hope alone, but reason , not desire alone, but revealing intuition, prove to me the reality of this wonder.

SECOND FOLLOWER. Rejoice ! The Lord is faithful ! He hath come !

PRIEST. Blasphemer ! Madman !

LAWYER. Do not heed them. They are paid agitators.

MERCHANT. There is danger in the state ! Look to your books, Lawyer. It may be wise to study the laws punishing sedition——

PRIEST. And blasphemy.

ARTIST. What is this rumour ? A voice from the skies, they say ? I heard nothing. Was there a sign ?

FIRST. O painter of signs and symbols, take your brush and palette, for the Dawn of the Kingdom is glorious in the East !

ARTIST. And of what is this dawn ? I see no difference in this dawn from any other.

FIRST. Then you are no artist, but a painter of meaningless forms ! The eyes of a true artist could not fail to see the beauty of this dawn !

ARTIST. [*laughing*] Poor fellow ! He raves !

MERCHANT. You will do better to paint my portrait, Artist. I will pay you well. A painter of dreams, in these days, starves. Remember that.

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM

ARTIST. You are right. I will paint your portrait. It shall hang in the nation's gallery for all eyes to see. Poor men will envy you, and I shall become famous—and rich, I hope.

POET. I heard the music of the spheres——

MERCHANT. Where are those verses I ordered from *you* to advertise my goods? You began them well. Let me see, how did they go? “From East to West, From North to South——” “Best” was to rhyme with “West”, and——

SOLDIER. Listen to me, Poet! While you are mooning about the music of the spheres, a certain high personage, who shall be nameless, is waiting for the new love-song he ordered you to write.

POET. I have written it. I will read it to you.

SOLDIER. Are you mad? Not here! In this public place? You'll get me into trouble. I——

POET. It is not for him alone. It is for everyone.

[*He reads*]

Love bears victorious, through the ranks of Hate
The flaming torch of God's triumphant State.
Behold the warring Churches, shamed and dumb,
Shrink, each before their Founder, newly come!
While, lo! like shadows at the dawn of day,
Their ancient superstitions melt away.

[*All roar with laughter.*]

MERCHANT. If that's all you can do now, you have lost my custom.

SOLDIER. You won't find a market in high places for that stuff.

MULLÁ. [*rushing in*] Allah! Allah! I am blinded!

LAWYER. Be calm! Be calm! What is it?

MULLÁ. This morning when I turned to the East, the sun blinded me! Never in my life have I seen so bright a dawn!

FIRST. It is the Dawn of the Manifestation of God for this Day. The Dawn of God's Prophet, Baha'u'llah !

THIRD FOLLOWER. Allah O Abha !

MULLÁ. Beware ! This is the voice of a deceiver ! His prophet is a false prophet ! There is none after Mahomet, the Seal of the Prophets !

FIRST. Mahomet put his Seal to the teaching of the earlier Prophets, as Baha'u'llah has done to-day, but there is no limit to the Bounty of the Merciful God. The Dawns of His Manifestation shall never cease !

MULLÁ. Deafen your ears to him ! He is dangerous ! He is destroying the power of the 'Ulamá, the Priests of the Prophet of God !

RABBI. Tell us, Man, who is your Prophet ?

FIRST. Hussein Ali Nouri, who is called BAHÁ'U'LLAH, the Splendour of God, the Divine Illumination, the Torch of Heaven, He who holds a pure mirror to reflect the Sun of Truth. BAHÁ'U'LLAH, He whom God would make manifest to this age ! BAHÁ'U'LLAH, the Promised One of all faiths ! To Christians He is the Returned Christ ; to Israel, the Messiah ; to Islam, the Qaim and the Mihdi ; to Buddhists, the Fifth Buddha ; to the followers of Zoroaster, He is Sháh Bahrám ; to Hindus, He comes as Krishna ; and to those without a formal religion, He brings a new social order ! To all He brings Peace, and Unity, and Love.

MERCHANT. A Paragon !

[*Laughter.*]

PRIEST. [*angrily*] Antichrist !

Some frown, perplexed. Others laugh outright, and return to their work, scoffing. A great lady, leaving the revellers, wraps a cloak around her, and draws near to the Followers of the Light, listening to every word.

PRIEST. Where are the signs ? Tell us that ! Where are the earthquakes ? If the Promised One has come,

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the Sun should not give his light, the moon should be darkened, and the stars should fall !

MANY VOICES. Aye ! Aye ! Aye !

PASTOR. For once the Priest is right. We await our Messiah till these signs be fulfilled.

PRIEST. We expect to see Him come in clouds of ~~great~~ glory, descending.

FIRST. Whence did Christ come ? He came from Heaven, though they who scoffed at Him, said : " We know this man. He cometh from Nazareth." The Truth is this : His spirit came from Heaven, though His body was born of woman. As it was then, so has it been with the Second Coming, and thus will it be forever, so long as the human race shall endure.

PRIEST. Nonsense ! The earth must shake !

PASTOR. The mountains be rent asunder !

PRIEST. The Promised One shall conquer the East and the West !

MULLA. The Imam Mihdi shall come in majesty, and all shall behold Him !

FIRST. These are not outward signs. Those who look with the eye of Truth shall see that these are the signs of the spirit. The Eternal Spirit descends from the Kingdom of God, the body is of the earth. The mountains are men of high renown, whose illustrious names in their day sink into insignificance when the Dawn of the Manifestation fills the world with light.

The pomp of Annas and Caiaphas is outshone by the simple glory of the Christ. The earthquake is the wave of spiritual life that moves through all and makes creation quiver with a new force. The prophecies concerning the Coming of Christ were mystical. The prophecies concerning the Second Coming are also mystical. The earthquake, the unrest, the darkening of the sun, the falling of the stars, all these tell of the humiliation of those whom the world considers great.

ACT I

Theologians wrapt in the blindness of dogma and of superstition ; the bigots, the tyrants, and the hypocrites, these will fall !

PRIEST. This man is dangerous ! He speaks blasphemy and sedition !

ATHEIST. You speak to these people in a language they can understand. You all have one mutual ground for discussion. You believe in God. I do not. God is not a fact. We possess no sense by which we can perceive him. Therefore he does not exist.

FIRST. Once I thought the same.

ATHEIST. [*smiling*] And what wonder persuaded you to think otherwise ? What has made you so zealous a champion of God ?

FIRST. First of all it was the realisation of the impotence of Man. Then came a vision of the Kingdom of God, and His divine Messengers to Humanity. I know now that the life of the body and the life of the spirit are one life, and that if Man desire the life eternal he must prepare himself for the citizenship of the Kingdom of God.

ATHEIST. The Kingdom of God is an abstraction. We deal with facts.

FIRST. The facts of to-day are but the memories of to-morrow. You fight for the possession of wealth, but when you die your riches pass from you. You fight for the possession of land, but what land do you possess when you die, but the measure of a grave ? And when your memory fades in the hearts of your friends, the unvisited tomb is forgotten, and the headstone crumbles to dust. If you would live forever, prepare yourself for the Kingdom which is eternal !

ATHEIST. But I know by measurement of time and space, by history and all the branches of science that there can be no other kingdom beyond the Kingdom of Man. There is no room for it.

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FIRST FOLLOWER. So say the rocks when they converse with one another. The rocks say : " Every particle of rock is so close to the next, there is no room for anything but rock." And the ocean speaks, saying : " There is no limit to the waters of the seas, the rivers, and the lakes. Each drop is so close to the other, there is no room for anything but water." And the living plants, the trees, they all say : " We grow, and we look down on the earth from which we draw our sustenance, and we look up to the sky, from which we enjoy light and air and rain ; we acknowledge the existence of these things, the earth, the air, the water, but there is no other kingdom. How can there be another ? " And so with you, materialists and atheists, you look down upon the kingdoms below you, and you say " These things I can count, measure, correlate, and express in formulae. Without question, they exist. They fill the Universe. There is no room for any other kingdom." Yours is the blindness of the rocks, of the trees and of the ocean.

ATHEIST. Is, then, all I see, illusion ?

FIRST. You see through a glass, darkly.

ATHEIST. Is the Kingdom of which you speak real ?

FIRST. It is Reality.

ATHEIST. Is the life you speak of as " eternal ", life as I understand it ?

FIRST. Life is one.

ATHEIST. Is not Man the crown of Evolution ?

FIRST. If you imagine so, you as Man are guilty of stupendous pride. In you is the life of the rocks, and the trees, of the sea, and of the animals of the earth. Life is an endless chain. There is a life beyond you, compared with which your present life is death.

ATHEIST. You have not convinced me ! Death is Night and Nothingness. We were cowards not to face the truth. This life eternal is a dream !

FIRST. Dreams are of the soul, and that which is conceived in the soul will be brought forth with rejoicing.

ATHEIST. The soul itself is a dream !

FIRST. For good or evil, this world is built on dreams. Dreams of progress, dreams of personal ambition, dreams of self-sacrifice, dreams of advancement in learning and scientific discovery, dreams of poetry, music, and painting, of sculpture, and the strong abiding art of architecture ; dreams are the driving force of achievement. What is civilisation, what is culture, but the fruit of dreams ? The whole history of mankind is built on dreams. Dreams are the language of the soul. And yet you deny the reality of the soul itself ?

[Atheist remains silent for a moment.]

ATHEIST. Even if I were to grant the possibility of the soul, which I prefer to call "the mind", it does not follow that I must also grant the possibility of God.

FIRST. Would it not be wiser to confess your ignorance rather than to assert your pride ? It is true that no man can understand the nature of God. But a man who can say with assumed authority that there is no God is as guilty of bigotry and pride as any religious dogmatist.

ATHEIST. You make me think. Let me say with humility that I do not believe in any definition of God I have yet heard. I should like to hear yours.

FIRST. God is Love.

ATHEIST. *[smiling]* That is as old as the hills.

FIRST. Still older. Love is Life. God is Love. I know why you are not satisfied with that definition.

ATHEIST. Why ?

FIRST. It is too simple. The Mystery of all mysteries is veiled by our limited understanding. In our conception of God we imply therefore the highest attributes which we are capable of imagining. God is the Essence of the purest qualities, the most glorious, the most powerful

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sovereignty which Man can conceive. If Personality be good, then we ascribe Personality to the Highest, to help our understanding. The most exalted fruits of evolution that we know are the mind and the character of Man. If there be a Kingdom above our own, we can only dimly discern it by reaching out with the powers of imagination, and so investing the world beyond with all the perfections which this world lacks. If there be a Kingdom, why not a King?

ATHEIST. It is all imagination, all metaphysical. We *know* nothing.

FIRST. [*smiling*] You have already reached the state of agnosticism, and have left atheism behind.

ATHEIST. I am willing to learn. Until now I believed only in those things which I could prove beyond a doubt. I cannot promise to believe in your Kingdom, but you convince me to the point of confessing that it is not impossible. Where can I hear more about this matter?

FIRST. Study the words of the Prophets. Discriminate between the fulfilment and the abuse of the Holy Teaching by those who profess it. In the sublime virtues of the Saints of to-day and yesterday you will find the dawning of the Kingdom of God.

Atheist inclines his head and moves quietly away, deep in thought.

FIRST. O Peoples of the Earth, take heed! Divide not the things of the body from the things of the Spirit! The Coming of the Kingdom is the eternal Spirit of God, breathed into the Body of Mankind! The Message for this age is the Regeneration of the Peoples! Take heed! The Lord Jesus taught the divine lesson of Love through individual sacrifice, and the purification of the soul. Baha'u'llah commands that this law be extended from the individual to institutions, to nations, to governments, to races, to continents, and to the whole wide world of Humanity!

ACT I

In the time of the Lord Jesus this was not possible. To-day, when the four corners of the earth are knit by communications on land, by sea and air, when the discoveries and inventions of Science make the surface of the globe as one country, these things are possible. Yet man has chosen rather to use the results of material civilisation for the scientific destruction of his fellows, and for the deadly pursuit of war.

Know that the Kingdom of God is the Spirit of Love supreme in the making and administration of laws, in education, in art, in trade, in politics, in international relations, and in the practice of the living religions ; so that the age-long causes of strife and division may melt away before the radiance of the Inner Light which is ONE !

EASTERN STUDENT. In the triumph of Love which is the triumph of the Kingdom, men shall at last behold the glory of Heaven , men shall at last behold the splendour of Truth Eternal.

Distant music is heard: the refrain of the Herald's Call.

The First Follower, leading the Followers of the Light in a procession, passes out through the crowd, who stand mutely staring and wondering. The great Lady follows them at a little distance. Her admirers endeavour to prevent her. She persists. All but one, the Seeker after Truth, they forsake her.

The followers sing a hymn, taking up the heavenly refrain. After they have passed out, a man climbs on to a bench and points after them, mocking. The crowd jeer and point, then, shrugging their shoulders and scoffing, they return to their various occupations.

CURTAIN.

WESTERN STUDENT. [reading] "According to a recent computation of ether waves, Man, with his present faculties, is able to perceive only one forty-thousand-

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millionth part of the vibrations which are known to exist." [*He looks up from his book in a mental contest between wonder and bewilderment.*]

One . forty-thousand-millionth part ! And I was boasting that Man is the Crown of Evolution ! What an immense vista of Possibility this fact unveils ! What vast fields of speculation !

And here, again, one of our most distinguished men of science says : " If the Universe is a universe of thought, then its creation must have been an act of thought." And, further on : " Time and Space, which form the setting for the thought, must have come into being as part of this act." " Non in tempore, sed cum tempore, finxit Deus mundum." [*pause*] " Deus ! " The Mighty Thinker !

EASTERN STUDENT. " O Son of Man ! Time and Space are the measure of thine understanding. I am not bound thereby ! Within and beyond Space and Time is My imperishable dominion ! "

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM is enacted in the souls of the faithful ; but ye who count the treasures of the Earth greater in value than the Splendour of God, ye pass by, unheeding !

Behold the Court of Temporal Power, where the Voice of the Merciful is drowned in the clamour of pride and self-exaltation !

ACT II

TEMPORAL POWER

ENTER before the curtain a disorderly crowd of the very poor. Then some soldiers, who push them aside to make way for a royal procession. Enter two trumpeters, who blow a brazen fanfare to herald the coming of the Monarch of Material Civilisation. In procession come Priests (Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, Mullds, Rabbis), the Marshal, the Merchant, the Press, the Lawyer, the Politicians, the Chancellor, and, lastly, King Mammon and his Courtiers, Pride, Greed, Fear, Suspicion, Malice, Indifference, and Courtesans. The Artist also comes. The poor cry out for bread and justice. A maniac rushes at one of the princely train and kills him. The soldiers arrest the fanatic and take him away. The rest pass on with an expression of disgust, some show selfish fear, but none pity. More soldiers enter with martial music to drive the crowd back. The procession continues on its way. After the last noble has passed, the soldiers drag away some protesting poor, and carry off those who have been hurt in the crowd.

The curtain rises. THE COURT OF KING MAMMON

The King takes his place on the throne in the centre, the arms of which are decorated with the heads of gilded calves.

ALL. Long live King Mammon !

KING. We thank you for the sentiments which you have just expressed. They are natural since you all depend for your lives on the preservation of my health.

He grins maliciously. They all smile politely, but look at one another in fear.

KING. We hear that there is danger in the State.

MARSHAL. Grave danger to our security.

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CHANCELLOR. We would have your Majesty informed of the fact that a small band of men and women calling themselves "The Followers of The Light" are undermining the very foundations of Society.

MERCHANT. These people have been disseminating dangerous teaching among rich and poor alike.

CHANCELLOR. They are subverting the laws regarding the sanctity of property and the liberty of the individual by saying that there should be limits to extreme poverty and limits to extreme wealth.

MARSHAL. They are teaching the Unity of Mankind.

CHANCELLOR. That type of pernicious universalism which undermines the loyalty of the people and destroys patriotism.

MERCHANT. An insidious internationalism which weakens competition and injures trade.

CHANCELLOR. They presume to dictate a foreign policy which would deliver us completely into the hands of our enemies. Love indeed! Whoever heard of Love in Foreign Affairs!

MERCHANT. Or Love in Trade! [*laughs*] It's laughable! It would be merely ridiculous and beneath one's notice if they were not making converts by the score.

CHANCELLOR. They teach that every child should have an equally good education, no matter to what class of society he may belong; that the sick and aged should be amply provided for; and that the means of existence should be assured to all.

KING. Pauperism!

MARSHAL. Revolution!

CHANCELLOR. I need hardly say that the Exchequer could not possibly bear the burden of such a programme, even if it were desirable.

MARSHAL. I should think not. Remember I am not at all satisfied with the Army Estimates this year.

ACT II

CHANCELLOR. If they had their way they would abolish you completely, Marshal. That's one of their principles. They want to put an end to War.

MARSHAL. [*laughing*] That is the best joke I have heard for a long time ! End to War ? End to human nature !

KING. This is not a laughing matter. These things grow. You have only to read history to see that. This must be suppressed before it gets any further.

MALICE. They should be exterminated—like vermin—these " Followers of The Light ! "

R.C. PRIEST. They are dangerous heretics

ORTHODOX. They call " Dogma " " superstition ".

PROTESTANT. They profess Christianity, but they also profess Mahommedanism, and Buddhism, and Hinduism, and every other so-called religion under the sun. The implications in this dangerous creed are obvious. They believe the teachings of others to be of equal importance with the teaching of Christ. They are therefore guilty of blasphemy. They say all religions are fundamentally the same. They are therefore guilty of polytheism. They say the Churches have misinterpreted and deformed the teaching of Christ. If they confined their condemnation to Nonconformists and Roman Catholics, or the High Church Party, who persist in reserving the Sacrament and wearing illegal vestments

ANGLICAN. If this gentleman will read the rubrics he will see that chasubles and dalmatics are permitted——

PROTESTANT. But not kissing the stole, and how about reserving the Sacrament ? You evade my statement. What is the difference between your " Devotions " as you call them and the Popish " Benediction ", may I ask ?

ROMAN. All the difference in the world, Sir ! You are heretics, both of you ! Your Majesty must allow me to protest. This person is unwarrantably using the

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heresy of these Followers of Darkness, as I prefer to call them, as an excuse for attacking Holy Church in public.

KING. Ministers of Religion ! It is only on sufferance that you are tolerated in these days. Your churches are emptying fast, and your coffers with them. You are rapidly becoming effete and out of date. And my God ! If the exhibition you have just indulged in is a sample of the kind of religion you profess, I don't blame your flocks for deserting you ! Finally, your bickerings do not entertain me in the least.

The clerics retire, discomfited.

KING. And you, Lord Press, how are you meeting this insidious campaign against our well-being and security ?

PRESS. Sire, I have done my best. With the financial support of my Lord Merchant, to whose ingenious and remunerative advertisements I owe the success of my daily papers, I have filled the world with reports of these Followers of The Light and their dangerous creed, colouring my articles with so vivid a forecast of catastrophe, that they needs must stimulate fear and disgust in the minds of the people.

KING. Bring forward the People. Question them.

An Usher brings three men before the King. They are dressed in dull clothes of city workers, and have the dejected mien of the drudges of material civilisation. They shall be called A., B., and C.

CHANCELLOR. Who is all-powerful ?

A., B., AND C. [*dully*] King Mammon. Long live the King.

CHANCELLOR. In what lies his power ?

A., B., AND C. In High Finance.

CHANCELLOR. What does he control by Finance ?

ACT II

A., B., AND C. The forces of Civilisation.

CHANCELLOR. From what raw material are these forces generated?

A., B., AND C. From the lives of men, from the lives of women, from the lives of children.

CHANCELLOR. How is King Mammon able to extract these forces of Civilisation from the People?

A., B., AND C. [*in a dull, mechanical monotone*] By keeping the People in ignorance, servility, snobbery, credulity, fear of hunger, fear of illness, overcrowding, lack of leisure, lack of pleasure, despair and weakness, death and Hell! [*A sharp, abrupt ending with a note of defiance.*]

CHANCELLOR. [*after a startled silence*] In other words, by upholding the structure of Society. In a building there must be foundations, there must be ascending strata of bricks and stones before the majestic proportions of the pillars can rise to support the noble arches and the crowning glory of the roof. You, my dear People, are the stones in the foundations. Your existence, though not ornamental, is obviously necessary. You understand?

A., B., AND C. We understand. [*dully*]

CHANCELLOR. You are not complaining of your lot?

A., B., AND C. [*dully*] We are not complaining. There are others less fortunate. It is not respectable to complain.

CHANCELLOR. Understanding as you do the importance of keeping the intricate structure of Society intact, you will no doubt give us all the information you can regarding this new sect or fellowship, who call themselves "Followers of The Light", or, more presumptuously, "Citizens of the Kingdom of God". Their existence is most dangerous to the State. Answer me in your own private capacity as an individual. [*pointing to A.*] What do you know of these people?

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A. turns to B. and C., tongue-tied. They whisper among themselves.

CHANCELLOR. Speak. Do not be afraid.

B. and C. push A. forward. He opens his mouth to speak, but no words come.

CHANCELLOR. Are you incapable of separate speech?

A., B., and C. nod affirmatively, with one accord.

CHANCELLOR. Then all together. Tell us what you know of these people.

A., B., and C. consult together, then, standing in a row they speak with one voice.

A., B., AND C. We know nothing. [*mechanically*]

CHANCELLOR. Do you mean to say—Why, all the papers are full of them. You must have some opinion on the subject.

A., B., AND C. [*together, jerkily and mechanically*] It has never happened before in our lifetime. We do not recognise this thing, so it cannot be true or reliable or respectable. The Bible is a book for Sundays. These people, the Followers of The Light, behave every day as though they were living in the Bible story. They go about among us with shining faces like Saints of the early Church, into our homes, in the market places, in gardens, in hospitals and schools; preaching their religion on week-days; with no order of priesthood. We are afraid of anything new which might make people think that we are keeping strange company, or that we are not honest or sober or respectable.

CHANCELLOR. We understand. Very proper. However, we shall not hurt you if you tell us what you really think.

A., B., AND C. We do not think.

ACT II

KING. [*laughing*] Very good. Don't worry them any more. Let them go in peace. We are satisfied that this thing has not gone very far. [*A., B., and C. retire, bowing abjectly.*] You say those were three men you picked up in the street?

CHANCELLOR. You heard, your Majesty, the voice of the Man-in-the-Street.

KING. Bring me the Leader of these "Followers of The Light", these "Citizens of the Kingdom". Tcha! Kingdom, indeed!

Soldiers lead in the First Follower, bound in chains.

KING. Well, Citizen of the Kingdom, what kind of people have you among your followers?

FIRST. I have no followers.

KING. Don't play with words. How many are there "following the light" with you?

Laughter from the Court.

FIRST. I cannot tell you the number. They are in every country in the world; they are in every town, in every street, perhaps in every house.

KING. This is serious. A network! An international conspiracy!

FIRST. There is no conspiracy. We do not concern ourselves with conspiracies. We wish harm to no one. Our politics are the politics of the Kingdom of God; our aim the foundation of His Kingdom on earth, as Christ foretold.

KING. This "Kingdom of God" has been the excuse for more conspiracies and wars in the history of mankind than any other Kingdom. But if you think you can make men fight and die for any religion in these days, you are much mistaken.

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FIRST. Though men may have to die for their religion, we do not call upon them to fight. It is part of our faith to abolish war.

MARSHAL. Do you hear that ?

KING. I asked what kind of people you have among your—your friends ?

FIRST. All men are my friends.

KING. You are not among friends here for one thing—and, for another, if you mis-answer me again I will have you beaten !

FIRST. I am ready.

CHANCELLOR. What kind of people have you as your companions in prison ?

FIRST. Some are drunkards, some are thieves, some are revolutionaries, some are mad.

KING. And to which class do you belong ?

Roars of laughter from the court.

FIRST. I am no drunkard with the wines of the earth, but I am aflame with the elixir of Life Eternal ! I have never thieved gold, but I have stolen the hearts and souls of men from the evil concourse of hypocrites and cowards, and have set their faces towards the Dawn. I am no rebel against the Law and the righteous powers of the state, nor do I desire the blood of any man ; but I am a rebel against the tyrannies of superstition and prejudice, and a revolutionary against spiritual blindness in high places, and those who sin through pride and greed and utter selfishness. I am not mad, as you are mad, for my intelligence is not confined within the bounds of my own small being, nor is my understanding chained to the things of this world. My mind, unfettered, soars beyond the mountain ranges of matter, over the ocean of Eternal Spirit to the immensity of the Plains of God !

ACT II

KING. [*after a pause*] For the purposes of this world you are undoubtedly mad. [*King consults with Chancellor, then continues to question the First Follower.*]

You believe that my kingdom can be overthrown and replaced by what you call "the Kingdom of God?"

FIRST. I do.

KING. It would interest me to know how you propose to set about it.

FIRST. I cannot do it alone.

KING. I hardly expected to hear you boast that you could. But who can?

FIRST. No one better, or more easily, or more effectively than you yourself. You could almost accomplish it alone, if you had the will!

KING. If I had the will?

FIRST. You could give your possessions for the welfare of the People, you could renounce your privileges for the benefit of the poor. This you would do gladly if you had seen the Dawn of the Kingdom of God!

KING. If I gave up my possessions, if I renounced my privileges, I should be taking my own life! I *am* my wealth! I *am* my privileges!

FIRST. Then you have no soul!

KING. It does not interest me. I have no use for souls. My body is enough for me, and if you and your "Followers of The Light" have designs on my comfort and security I must have you put to death, do you hear?

FIRST. I hear. I am ready.

KING. You have designs then?

FIRST. It is done. You know of this Revelation. Your comfort is disturbed. Your security is shaken. You will never be the same again, once having heard.

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM

KING. Take this man. Cast him into prison. His presence offends me.

Soldiers take the First Follower.

LADY. Take me as well! For I also believe!

KING. You!

MERCHANT. You! A great Lady! Your father is respected in the nation, your mother came of a princely house!

MARSHAL. I am shocked to see the traditions of so honoured a name dragged in the mire. Your brother is one of my officers. This will ruin his career!

CHANCELLOR. I beg of you, Lady, think of others.

LADY. It is of others I think. Brothers, sisters, all of you! Rejoice with me! Have you not also heard the glad tidings!

There is a stir among the Courtiers. Some move towards her, but are dragged back by their fellows. They all remain still, gazing at her in wonder.

CHANCELLOR. [*sighing*] She is mad like the rest!

KING. Take her to her father's house, and warn him to keep her confined to her room!

LADY. There are no doors which can imprison the Spirit!

KING. Take her away before she contaminates my Court!
Take her before it is too late!

Soldiers take the Lady.

YOUNG NOBLE. It is too late! We are touched with tongues of fire. Glory to God and His Mercy to this Age! Nothing you can do will stop the fire of the Spirit raging through the dry rot of tradition and the debris of worn-out creeds! Nothing you can do will stop the fire in our hearts, cleansing and invigorating; nor the fire in our tongues proclaiming the Day of the Lord!

ACT II

KING. Cast him into prison with the rest !

ANOTHER YOUTH. Then I shall follow !

ANOTHER. And I !

ANOTHER. And I also !

They are taken.

MARSHAL. The mischief is done !

MERCHANT. We must tread this thing under foot !

MARSHAL. Kill them ! The vermin ! Annihilate them !

MALICE. But torture them first. They deserve it.

GREED. No, no. Kill them all as quickly as possible.

We shall not be safe till they are all destroyed !

KING. Not so fast, not so fast ! We must find them all first, trace every one of them. Lay a trap. There are hundreds of them ; you heard what he said—hundreds, hiding like rats in every street. Let this handful go free, let them wander where they will. Watch them, observe, count !

CHANCELLOR. Magnificent ! O wise King ! The Leader, he must be set at liberty !

KING. Call the Governor of the Prison !

The Governor comes forward.

KING. You heard our stratagem ? [*Governor bows.*] Then set these people free and watch them, as I have said.

GOVERNOR. I shall have to empty my prison, then, for the Followers have converted the vagabonds and the drunkards and the thieves. They have even sobered the madmen. You should hear them all singing hymns ! My prison is more like a cathedral than a penitentiary !

KING. Do as I say. Be gone. [*Governor bows and departs.*] And now let Ayshih dance !

Music begins and a dancer begins her dance.

CURTAIN.

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM

WESTERN STUDENT. [*reading*] "Many would hold that the outstanding achievement of twentieth century physics is not the theory of relativity, with its welding together of space and time, or the theory of quanta with its present apparent negation of the laws of causation, or the dissection of the atom with the resultant discovery that things are not what they seem; it is the general recognition that we are not yet in contact with ultimate Reality."

EASTERN STUDENT. [*reading*] "O children of the divine and invisible Essence! Ye shall be hindered from loving Me and souls shall be perturbed as they make mention of Me. For minds cannot grasp Me, nor hearts contain Me!"

Students of the West, ye are taught that the part cannot contain the Whole! Hold yourselves therefore in humility, that ye may seek after the Truth not only in the study of Science, but in the teaching of Divine Philosophy, and in the measure of heavenly wisdom which the Prophets of God bring to every age! Reject not the language of symbol and metaphor wherewith the Divine Preceptors seek to clothe the Infinite with form! They speak to you with authority to help your understanding. Hear Them with the faith of children, and be not afraid!

Behold the Heavenly Feast where the Followers of The Light partake of the divine refreshment of Truth, and rejoice in the free communion of love and enlightenment!

ACT III

THE HEAVENLY FEAST .

A BANQUET HALL in some ruined castle on the outskirts of the city. The bare stone walls and pillars remain, but the roof is gone. Stars shine in the deep sapphire sky, and the hall itself is lit by the yellow glow of torches. There is a long table spread with simple but beautiful peasant-ware pottery, containing fruit and delicious foods. Unseen and heavenly music is heard. One by one the very poor and ragged guests creep in, and sit huddled by the wall. In the centre of the arched doorway the First Follower appears. He welcomes them by holding out his arms towards them on either side. The four young Nobles enter, bringing roses in silver jars, which they set on the tables, and they then stand ready to serve the poor with food. The great Lady of the Court enters, with a simple cloak drawn about her to hide the magnificence of her robes and jewels. At the First Follower's bidding, the very poor straighten themselves and, as in a dream, take the places at the table which the First Follower offers them. The Poet is there. He plays a flute, and all faces are radiantly happy.

FIRST. Remember what Christ said. The Kingdom of God is like unto a feast. Here we see the Kingdom ! The worldly rich and famous and the worldly wise are not here, but the poor are here.

FIRST RAGGED MAN. Allah O Abha ! Praise be to God from the concourse of friends ! Those who were prisoners are free ! Those who were enemies meet here as brothers ! Those who feared one another meet here in gentleness and trust ! Those who scorned one another meet here with mutual regard ! Those who envied one another meet here in a spirit of charity and generosity ! Those who deemed themselves polluted by one another's nearness meet here together as though their company were long-sought and precious. The barriers of Caste are broken down in the victory of love and fellowship !

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM

The clouds of enmity have dispersed before the winds of the Divine Spirit ! The night of Fear and Suspicion has fled before the Dawn of the Oneness of Mankind ! The dividing forces of Prejudice have been routed by the shining Armies of the Lord !

SECOND RAGGED MAN. Hear him ! A miracle ! The dumb has spoken !

THIRD RAGGED MAN. But yesterday this brother was silent and full of fear. He could scarce look one in the face ! His speech trembled on his lips. Now he speaks with Divine eloquence ! And holds his head high among his fellows !

LADY. The meaning of Life has come to me with the freshness of spring flowers ! The love of Humanity has opened in my heart like a rose unfolding in the midday sun ! Now I know the full meaning of joy ! For joy it is to give !

She opens her cloak and gives her jewels one by one to the ragged men and women. They take them reverently and gaze upon them in wonder.

LADY. Joy it is that knows not the word "mine". Joy, to share the treasures of the earth, to possess nothing and yet to possess all ! Joy, to claim the whole earth as one's native land ! Joy, to be sister to all men, to be mother to the children of the earth, to be daughter to all aged people ! Joy it is to praise the Father of all, and to magnify His Name ! Joy, to live in the Day of the Manifestation, and to see the Dawn ! Joy it would be to die for the Love of Humanity ! Joy it would be to make the supreme sacrifice !

FIRST YOUNG NOBLE. A miracle ! But yesterday this Lady wept and languished so that none could comfort her !

SECOND YOUNG NOBLE. Yesterday, dear Lady, you were sad, distraught, and weary. Despair cried from your heart, and disillusion dulled the fire in your eyes !

ACT III

To-day you are radiant and wonderful ! To-day the Light of the Manifestation shines from your eyes, and divine Womanhood clothes you with a new majesty !

FIRST. O Spirit of Qurratu'l-Ayn !

THIRD RAGGED MAN. Qurratu'l-Ayn ?

FIRST. She who proclaimed the Coming of the Lord. She who first unveiled her face in the Eastern Lands of subjected womanhood. She who fearlessly declared the Truth and made the supreme sacrifice !

FIRST NOBLE. Aye ! They tell how she stood before men and gave the glad tidings ; they tell how the narrow in spirit were alarmed, and the covetous 'Ulamá filled with dread.

SECOND NOBLE. And how they tortured her——

THIRD NOBLE. And encompassed her death——

FOURTH NOBLE. None would do it. She was so beloved !

FIRST. None dared look into her illumined eyes, and do her harm, till at last——

FIRST NOBLE. [*through tears*] At night black orders were given to strange and ignorant slaves——

SECOND NOBLE. And they took her, not knowing whom they slew, and in a garden—wrought her death.

FIRST. And her soul rose to God, from whence it came.

LADY. Qurratu'l-Ayn ! Give me strength to follow thee !

Enter Spy with bag of gold.

FIRST. Welcome, brother ! Will you sup with us ?

SPY. You have poor fare for a feast !

FIRST. We are well content. Will you join us ? You are welcome !

SPY. I could bring you better food than this. See ! [*He opens his bag of gold.*] Gold ! Gold ! I reckon you have seldom seen gold in such quantity !

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM

FIRST. [*letting a few coins run through his fingers*] These are the counters men play with, and the stake is death.

SPY. [*seating himself next First Follower*] That is a cynical remark. Money is life, not death. Without money a man starves, and if he starve he dies.

FIRST. [*smiling*] And with money a man also dies.

SPY. Ah! But not so soon!

FIRST. Not so soon, may be, but sometimes more completely.

SPY. How is that?

FIRST. If a man store his wealth or lend it in usury, if a man keep more than his share, thereby robbing the poor, if a man contemplate his wealth, care for it above all else, and neglect the treasures of the spirit, when such a man dies, what has he? Can he take his gold beyond the grave? No. Has he by the practice of learning, the garnering of wisdom, the spending of brotherly love, laid up for himself treasure in Heaven? No. He has counted these things of little value. He has had no time for them. Beyond there, in the world of the spirit, his soul faints in spiritual hunger and poverty. He is lost in the mists of remorse and despair. If he would speak with someone, how is he able? He knows not the language of the soul. His eyes strain towards the earth where his treasure lay. His heart longs for the days that are gone. His powerless fingers clutch at the empty air, as he sees his wealth pass into the hands of others. Such a man dies more horribly, more completely than the poor man who has nothing to loose by death.

SPY. But you are not dead yet! [*he rises and points to the gold*] While you live, good people, you must eat and be clothed, you must have shelter—I see you have no roof here—your homes are probably worse.—[*cunningly*] Look! I wish to lay up for myself treasure in Heaven by sharing my gold with you! For the health of *your* bodies, shall we say, and for the health of *my* soul!

ACT III

FIRST. If that were sincere, if that were general among the rich, what misery could be avoided !

SPY. Ah ! You see your Leader accepts ! If each of you will take this money from me now and give me your address I will send you more to-morrow. Further, if each of you will give me a list of the friends you have who call themselves "Followers of The Light" I will send them gold as well ! For seven days from to-day will I send you, each and all, a bag of gold to your homes !

FIRST. We are rich. We do not need your gold.

FIRST RAGGED MAN. You think we are poor because you see our rags. But if you could see with the eye of the spirit you would see that we are clothed in the glorious raiment of the Kingdom !

SECOND RAGGED MAN. You think this is simple fare, but if you looked with the eyes of the spirit, you would see that it is manna from Heaven !

FIRST YOUNG NOBLE. Stranger ! Open the eyes of your soul and behold the Truth ! The Day has come when hypocrisy and pretence must give way before sincerity and simple faith ! Your gold is the symbol of the chains that bind the human soul to the drudgery of material civilisation. By gold the eyes of men are holden that they see not the glories of the Kingdom. By gold are men led in delusion from one folly to another, till the mirage of power and wealth which drew them on, fades into the mists of disappointment and bitterness ! By gold are men led to believe that life is gold and the gladness thereof, and that poverty is death. Know you that there is a poverty of soul nearer to death than any lack of gold !

FOURTH RAGGED MAN. The true Philosopher's Stone, O Stranger, is not the formula for making gold, but the formula for universal Peace and gladness, and the Seeker shall find it through Love and Patience, through self-sacrifice and loyalty to the Kingdom of God.

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM

SECOND RAGGED MAN. Hear him! He also speaks with freedom of those things mysterious which until to-day were beyond his learning. Stranger, behold the power of the Spirit! It loosens the tongue to speak of high Philosophy!

FIFTH RAGGED MAN (*the blind Mulla*). It has come! It has come! The sight of my eyes, so that I can behold the glories of the Kingdom!

SIXTH RAGGED MAN. And I can hear! I who was deaf till now! A tumult of radiant harmony assails my ears? Music I have never known! Words I have only read, live at last in sound! What glory is the voice of Man!

FIRST. Sometimes it is an echo of the Voice of God! In this holy place, let all else be dumb! Go, Stranger, with your gold. Your name is Judas!

The Spy tries to speak. He is convulsed with the effort, but he cannot utter a sound.

FIRST RAGGED MAN. [*dropping the jewel given him by the Lady in the Spy's sack*] Take this symbol with the rest. It has served. I need it no more.

SECOND RAGGED MAN. [*doing the same*] And take this, too. You who came to deceive us shall return richer than you came, with the riches you value most.

THIRD RAGGED MAN. And this. May the purity of this gift refine your gold for better uses!

FOURTH RAGGED MAN. Your temptation is vain. Take this, and leave us in peace.

While the rest of the poor drop their jewels into his sack, the Lady speaks to the Spy.

LADY. I deserve this humiliation! I imagined that a tardy gift of gold suffices! I have valued my jewels too greatly! O Stranger, I charge you to scatter these pieces among the homeless and hungry!

ACT III

SPY. My revenge for this insult will be to deliver you all unto death !

FIRST. He finds his voice, because now he speaks the truth !

The Spy looks round in great fear and hurries away, moaning. Just outside the door he drops his bag of money and jewels, and they lie scattered on the ground. A beggar passing outside stoops to pick them up. He greedily gathers them and hides them in his garments. Another beggar comes along. They quarrel and begin to struggle. Another comes, and another, till at last there are a crowd seen struggling and fighting over the spilt contents of the sack. All this is seen through the great arched doorway in the centre. The First Follower and his guests watch the scene in dismay. Soldiers come along and drive the crowd away, killing some and arresting others. When all is silent again the First Follower speaks.

FIRST. There you saw the nations of the earth at war. There you saw greed and crime and the nature of the beast ! It is the fruit of injustice, selfishness, and oppression on the one side, and of fear, hunger, and desperation on the other. Until material civilisation conforms to the civilisation of the spirit, this will continue.

A shrouded figure walks in at the doorway from the night outside. He removes the covering from his face, pale, young, and beautiful.

FIRST. Behold ! One who was dead liveth again !

THE RISEN. I was dead, but now I live ! I have heard the glad tidings and I believe ! I read many books on earth, and talked with learned men. Some would say : " Christ never lived." Others : " The Gospels are legends and myths." Even then I would say : " What marvellous fiction ! " These learned men would tell me that my body would return to dust, and that I and

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM

my body were one and inseparable. That my soul was a dream of my brain, and that when my brain was divorced from the life-blood that fed it, my soul would perish ! Yet behold I am spirit ! As Christ rose from the dead so also am I risen ! I know the Truth and to true men am I known !

FIRST. The King of Terrors is vanquished ! Praise be to God !

THE RISEN. Last night I touched my tutor on the shoulder. He was weeping over a manuscript of mine, weeping for my death and murmuring, "Such promise ! Such promise !" I laughed and touched him a second time, a third time, but he would not look at me. I cried for all the world to hear : "I am not dead ! In comparison with me it is you who are dead. Promise, you say ? I will fulfil that promise a thousandfold more easily here than before !" But he would not hear. Look at me ! I am young and I shall never grow old !

Singing a song from the joy of his heart, he passes among them and through an inner door.

ALL. Glad tidings !

"O God, we were poor, Thou hast made us rich !
We were hungry, Thou hast made us satisfied !
Athirst were we, and Thou hast given us the water
of Life !
Our eyes were blinded, Thou hast given us sight !
We were dead, Thou hast given us Life Eternal !
We were of the Earth, Thou hast made us the Children
of Heaven !
We were outcasts, Thou hast made us beloved !
We were impotent, Thou hast made us powerful !
We praise Thee, O Lord !"

After this, glorious diadems descend from Heaven and rest on each head. They shine with the radiance of heavenly jewels. All wonder.

ACT III

FIRST. These are the crowns of the Kingdom! You are all kings in Heaven! You shall have eternal dominion! You shall have everlasting glory! The illumination of the Spirit is yours! God hath chosen you for His Service!

They take their crowns and kiss them, and again place them on their heads

ALL. O God! O Almighty!

We give thanks to Thee for these proofs of Thy Bounty! Thou hast given us Life! Make us faithful! So that the fire of Thy Love may fill our hearts, that Thy Light may illumine our faces! Suffer us to be firm like unto Christ, Who gave up His life for us!

Heavenly music is heard. Dark figures of soldiers with swords and lances and rifles are seen outlined against the faintly-glowing dawn, as they surround the house

CURTAIN.

WESTERN STUDENT. If there could be a re-statement of Religion for this age, which acknowledged the validity of Science, and retained all that was good and true in the religions of the past, and if this re-statement rejected superstitions and prejudices, then I could accept it with my mind and heart.

I feel profoundly that Man needs some kind of spiritual refuge from the giddy thoughts revealed by modern science. The keener his intellect, the higher are the flights of his imagination and the greater the danger of a mental and spiritual collapse.

O Supreme Thinker! Mighty Creator of the Universe in Whose Mind we have our being! O God! Renew Thine infinite mercy to Mankind, and send to this age, even as Thou didst send to the world two thousand years ago a Messenger of Divine Wisdom and a celestial Guide to those who walk in darkness!

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM

EASTERN STUDENT. The wisdom of the new revelation is dawning in thy heart, O Student of the West ! Slowly and with tribulation the light of Truth penetrates the dark forest of superstition and blindness ! Custom and Convention, those giants of Decay, lie waiting to quench the newly-kindled fire in the Lamp of God ! As ever, these slaves of destruction strive against the new and the unknown, as ever they cower at the brink of the divine adventure, and turn deaf ears to the call of the celestial clarion ! Behold the Field of Martyrdom, where Man, defeated, boasts of victory, and God triumphs in the Supreme Sacrifice !

ACT IV

THE TRIUMPH OF GOD.

SCENE. THE FIELD OF MARTYRDOM

THE Officers of the Guard, Convention and Custom, and a dozen soldiers, armed with rifles, formed into a firing party, stand at ease. The Followers are grouped against a wall. They include the noble lady, the poet, the artist, the atheist, the one who was deaf and the one who was blind, the lady of light character, a young noble, and the First Follower. Thieves are also among those to be executed. Other Followers are present and mourn for those condemned. They form, at last, the Heavenly Choir.

CUSTOM. Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's !

FIRST. And to God, the things which are God's.

CUSTOM. And to the Devil, his own !

CONVENTION. Now, you " Followers of The Light ", for the benefit of the murderers and thieves who may be released and come back into Society, I will tell you what you have done to offend. You may not have understood all the long words they used in the trial.

CUSTOM. You are wasting your breath.

CONVENTION. I don't agree with you. I never lose an opportunity of making a speech.

CUSTOM. Then preach on the text: " Render unto Caesar ".

CONVENTION. You heard those words? They are the words of Christ. You cannot quarrel with His very words, you " Followers of The Light ".

FIRST. We do not, but that is not all of His saying. We acknowledge the whole truth, not only the part. Who is Caesar?

CUSTOM AND CONVENTION. King Mammon.

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM

CONVENTION. He is also God, if there is a God.

CUSTOM. And if there is no God, then the last part of the saying has no meaning.

FIRST. If you do not believe in God, why do you quote the words of His Prophet ?

CUSTOM. It's an old habit. A tradition. Just as we use God's name to swear by. It means nothing.

CONVENTION. A convention. To be frank with you, we profess Christianity because we like to appear staunch and unchanging. We have called ourselves Christians for many hundreds of years, therefore we must go on calling ourselves Christians, even though we find the practice of Christianity irksome at times.

CUSTOM. The truth is, we have given up the Christian religion with the exception of a few pleasant customs chiefly connected with food and dress.

CONVENTION. The Churches still delude themselves into believing they are practising Christianity. Most of them are admirable galleries of fashion on Sundays, and empty the rest of the week. You want us to change our religion ? No, no, thank you. We have a most comfortable creed.

FIRST. O ye Churches of God ! Ye are the witnesses to Man's undying faith ! Blessed be those sacred buildings ! Blessed be the names of the saints and the martyrs who have suffered to keep pure the stream of living religion ! We who follow The Light do not teach the necessity of a man changing his religion. Our hope is that, when he sees his own faith in the light of this new revelation, his religion will change him.

CONVENTION. That is sophistry. Our religion serves as a passport into relations with other countries of the same creed. It is the stamp of civilisation and respectability. We make treaties with Christians as equals.

FIRST. And make war upon them with the same consideration and respect.

CUSTOM. We prefer to make war on pagans.

ACT IV

FIRST. In God's sight there are no pagans. All the peoples of the earth are of one family. Leaves of one branch. Branches of one tree.

CUSTOM. There ! That's the kind of thing that all decent citizens find intolerable.

CONVENTION. That is why you are here ! It is the essence of disloyalty and the seed of sedition !

Enter an Equerry from the King.

EQUERRY. [to Lady] Lady, I have been sent to you with an offer from His Majesty the King.

LADY. Speak.

EQUERRY. If you but give up this cause which you have embraced, His Majesty will give you all you ask for your poor ; the houses, the hospitals, the schools, and the playgrounds in the city !

LADY. I have not accepted this Cause blindly through traditions from my ancestors. I have seen Reality with my own eyes. The truth is in my heart. How can you imagine that I should renounce my faith so lightly ?

Enter her father, a Nobleman.

NOBLE. Can I believe my eyes ? Is it you, my daughter ? You among this crowd of outcasts and criminals ? If I were not so grieved, I should curse you for the disgrace you have brought upon our house ! But I have not the strength. My spirit is broken. I shall never hold up my head again among my friends. I shall blush when I meet my peers. In the streets I shall hide myself from all true citizens. The Church will not know me except in the hours of silent prayer. How could I stand erect in the congregation burdened with this disgrace. Daughter, you have broken my heart ! You have hastened the death of your mother, who mourns the night long and is growing hourly weaker. You have ruined the careers of your brothers in the King's army,

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM

for how can any member of this disloyal house gain distinction? Disloyal, through you, and only you, disloyal! This house, which till the fatal day that saw your rebellion was the most loyal in the land. My daughter! Return with me! Abandon this Dream! It is madness! An obsession! Your mind is unbalanced! You are ill! Come home with me. When you are well again you will thank me for saving you!

LADY. O my father, you are torturing me! My soul is wrung with pity, but not with shame. Can you say there is no sun when you have seen the light? I have seen the Sun. I see the Sun. You, O my father, are blind. Awake! The Sun is shining!

*Noble turns aside and weeps.
Enter Messenger from the Prince.*

MESSENGER. O Lady! The Prince who shall rule this land after His Majesty the King, the first-born of the Royal House, salutes you! He bids me lay his love and all his princely state at your feet. In the name of the love he bears you he implores you to abandon this cause and to come to him. His one desire is to wed you. He pines and grows paler every day, and the physicians say that without you he will die! Have mercy, and come to him!

Messenger offers her a jewelled crown.

LADY. I know no Prince save God. I will not turn my face from the King of Kings. These jewels are to me so many pebbles. The jewels I treasure are the jewels of the knowledge of God. These earthly stones may be broken or lost. Look at my crown! These are eternal jewels. For those earthly stones that are doomed to perish, shall I give up this everlasting diadem?

MESSENGER. They will torture you!

ACT IV

LADY. I am ready.

MESSENGER. They will kill you !

LADY. Is that true ? Do you mean it ? Good news !
Good news ! For then I shall be free ! My soul will
escape like a bird at liberty from this earthly cage of
my body ! Then I shall be free ! Now I am in chains ;
they shall be broken ! Kill me ! Kill me !

Exit Messenger, dejected.

CUSTOM. You shall die at sunrise !

NOBLE. Then I shall stay ! Your death shall be mine
also ! Without honour I do not care to live !

CONVENTION. See what your madness has wrought !

CUSTOM. He must not die. He is too well known. If
he professed your faith no one would believe him !

Noble becomes faint.

LADY. Lead him home. Father ! Father ! Good-bye !

They lead the Noble away.

CONVENTION. A Priest comes to hear your confession
before you die.

FIRST. There are good priests, and there are evil priests.
There are those who are truly the messengers of God,
and shepherds of souls. These holy men who often
live in obscurity, labouring for the love of humanity
with no thought of gain or reward, these glorify the name
of the Lord and inherit the eternal Kingdom. Blessed
be the spiritual descendants of the saints of God ! If
this man be pure in heart he will rejoice with us ! If
his eyes be unclouded by the mists of prejudice and
superstition he will see the light we follow, and the
threat of death itself will not prevent him from proclaim-
ing the Day of the Lord !

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM

Enter the Priest.

CONVENTION. Here are the Followers of The Light !

EVIL PRIEST. Unhappy and deluded apostates ! The wrath of God is descended upon you ! Make your confessions while there is yet time ! Before your souls fly crying like lost birds into the wilderness of Hell, repent ! I adjure you in the name of——

FIRST. Stop !

EVIL PRIEST. I will. You are not worthy to hear those Holy Names !

FIRST FOLLOWER. Your lips are unworthy to utter them ! Priest of defiled Religion, you have scorned your Messiah ! You have turned your face away from the Son of God ! You have mocked His Sacrifice by your travesty of the holy sacraments ! You have turned the Word of God to your own base uses ! You have sinned against the Holy Spirit ! You and such as you, all down the ages, have brought Religion into contempt, you have made it abominable to all honest men ! You have betrayed your own Saints and have made capital out of the suffering and ignorance of humanity ! You have led your flock astray and sent them down the steep paths of destruction ! You have abandoned them in the hour of danger and allowed them to become the prey of the wolves of Anti-Christ !

EVIL PRIEST. [*choking with rage*] You, you are the wolves of Anti-Christ !

FIRST. We are Followers of The Light. We are servants of God.

EVIL PRIEST. You have no priests. That is one of your boasts, I hear. How can there be a religion without priests ? Explain that !

FIRST. Man needs no mediator between himself and God, no mediator, save that One Whom the Almighty sends from time to time to help man's understanding. He Whom we acclaim a Manifestation of God, long after

ACT IV

we have martyred Him. That Divine Preceptor Whom we persecute and then worship! Christ is Mediator, the Eternal Christ! His Holy Spirit sufficeth. If you had listened you would have heard His voice, if you had lifted your eyes to the Mountain of God, you would have seen His Glory. If you had cast away your prejudices you would have recognised the eternal Truth. If you had cleansed your heart, the Holy Spirit would have given you power to lead your flock into the way of Life Eternal!

EVIL PRIEST. *I am the Mediator between Christ and the People.*

FIRST. Then give them the glad tidings. Tell them they may all become mediators between those in darkness and the Light of Truth. There is no need for a new Order of Mediators and Priests. The Light is shining for all to behold. The Truth is proclaimed for all to hear. The path lies clear before all who turn their faces towards the Dawn!

EVIL PRIEST. You would vulgarise the Holy Office!

FIRST. Not I. It *has* been vulgarised. It has been abused by men of base nature. It has been made a mockery. It has become a barrier between the faithful and their true faith! This new proclamation of the eternal Message takes the Holy Office from the privileged orders of the warring sects and gives it to the faithful servants of God. Once again the eternal Christ drives the money-changers from the Temple of God!

EVIL PRIEST. The Temple of God! If you had your way you would destroy every sacred building that stands! Atheist! Revolutionary! Demon of Destruction!

FIRST. I would not destroy, I would cleanse the Temples of God! I would not empty the churches, I would fill them with worshippers of the Most High! Neither would I dismantle the altars of the ages, rather would I beautify them with the purest and loveliest art Man can create! I would not silence the sacred music, rather would I exalt its harmonies to the volume and purity of a celestial

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM

choir ! God is neither Catholic, nor Protestant, Muslim nor Hindu ! God is Most Great ! He is not confined within the limits of any single creed !

EVIL PRIEST. [*mockingly*] Is He not the Patron of your particular faith ? Are you not favoured above all men ?

FIRST. We are Followers of The Light. God is the Light we follow.

EVIL PRIEST. Is not your Prophet the greatest and last of the Prophets ?

FIRST. It is not for Man to compare the brilliance of the rays which are shed by the Eternal Sun of Truth ! Baha'u'llah is the latest, but not the last of the Prophets of God. The Dawns of the Divine Manifestation are infinite !

CONVENTION. They are forever repeating that phrase ! It has become an obsession.

FIRST. It cannot be proclaimed too often, for in that phrase lies the essence of Unity, and the expression of a profound truth. Acknowledge the light of God in the pure origin of other religions, proclaim His infinite and never-failing mercy to mankind, and prejudice has no cause to continue, superstition ceases to exist, and the clamour of discord dies from lack of enmity and intolerance !

EVIL PRIEST. A religion as fantastic and flimsy as that will soon die ! It has no body, no form, nothing !

FIRST. The spirit transcends the body. The meaning is of greater importance than the form. It is Unity we seek ; we do not strive after uniformity. There is every variety of flower in a perfect garden. Would you have every bloom alike in fragrance, colour, and form ? There is every form of faith in the Garden of God, and He finds those which are free from the weeds of prejudice and intolerance the most beautiful in His sight.

EVIL PRIEST. You presume to know the Mind of God ! Your arrogance and obstinacy are incorrigible ! I leave you to die unshriven !

ACT IV

FIRST. We die rejoicing ! The blood of martyrs forever watereth the Tree of Life.

Exit Evil Priest, making the sign of the cross over the Followers.

FIRST. For that holy sign we thank you ! God give us strength to bear the cross of Christ, and to suffer the Supreme Sacrifice !

CUSTOM. This has all happened before. I feel it. Yet I do not remember it.

CONVENTION. You read of it in history It has happened many times.

CUSTOM. Then it must be right.

CONVENTION. It is inevitable.

A bugle sounds. The sun rises.

CUSTOM. [*pointing L.*] Will you die against this prison wall, or against the Temple, facing the sun ?

FIRST. We will die facing the sun, in the precincts of the House of God !

He goes forward towards the west. Convention holds him back.

CONVENTION. No, no. You shall see your followers die first. That is always the custom. You shall witness the work of your own evil influence. [*He beckons to Second Follower.*] Come.

Custom signs to the soldiers, who move off to the west.

SECOND FOLLOWER (*the artist*). Praising God, I die for the Unity of Mankind !

Two soldiers lead him off to the west.

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM

CONVENTION. [*signing to the next Follower.*] Come.

THIRD FOLLOWER (*the one who was deaf*). Praising God,
I die for Universal Peace !

*Exit west, escorted. Distant firing is heard.
Convention signs to the next.*

FOURTH FOLLOWER (*the atheist*). With gladness I die for
Truth, and the fellowship of Science and Religion !
Praise be unto God !

*Exit. Distant firing.
Convention signs to the next.*

FIFTH FOLLOWER (*the woman of light character*). Glory to
God ! In His Name I die for the children of to-day
and of to-morrow, that they may have equality in the
education of the mind and in the healthy training of
the body.

*Exit. Distant firing.
Convention signs to the next.*

SIXTH FOLLOWER (*the blind Mulla*). Praising God, I die
for the eternal Truth in all Religions ! Tâou, Brahma,
Jehovah, Allah are One ! And Love is their message
to Mankind !

*Exit. Distant firing.
Convention signs to the next.*

SEVENTH FOLLOWER (*the noble lady*). With joy in my
heart I die praising God ! I follow in the steps of
Qurratu'l-Ayn, whose voice was the trumpet sound to
awaken the sleeping souls of women enslaved in all the
nations of the Earth !

*Exit. Distant firing.
Convention signs to the next.*

ACT IV

EIGHTH FOLLOWER (*poet*). Praising God, I die with gladness in my heart for the pervading Spirit of God, and its power in the souls of men !

*Exit. Distant firing.
Convention signs to the next.*

NINTH FOLLOWER (*a young noble*). Praising God, I die for the abolition of prejudice and superstition ! I die rejoicing !

*Exit. Distant firing.
Convention signs to the last, who is the First Follower of the Light.*

FIRST FOLLOWER. I die for the never-ending Search after Truth, the glory of learning, and the divine hunger for Knowledge ! I die unvanquished in the Eternal Quest ! I die with forgiveness in my heart for those who send me to my death, and with a prayer on my lips for their regeneration. I die praising the name of God and of His Messenger to this Great Day, Baha'u'llah !

Exit. Distant firing. Convention and Custom stand rigid and motionless. The light fades to darkness.

CURTAIN.

Before the curtain.

WESTERN STUDENT. Should I also have reviled Jesus of Nazareth ? If He came now, should I recognise Him ?

EASTERN STUDENT. In the fortress of Akka, the Lamp of God was imprisoned by the hands of men, but the Divine Illumination shone through the darkness, and the whole world became radiant with new light from the Sun of Truth !

EPILOGUE

GLAD TIDINGS!

SCENE : IN THE SHADOW OF THE HOUSE OF GOD

AT NIGHT. *The bodies of the martyrs lie covered over with shrouds. Enter a Guide and some Western Tourists.*

GUIDE. This is the place of execution.

FIRST TOURIST. To think that this can actually happen in the twentieth century!

GUIDE. It is not much more strange than the Great War.

SECOND TOURIST. You are right. We are just as bad in the West. But in a different way. We don't kill people because of their religion.

GUIDE. No. In the West you slay one another for material reasons only.

THIRD TOURIST. We are, at any rate, less hypocritical.

GUIDE. You make war, and at the same time profess Christianity.

FIRST TOURIST. Religion has lost its hold on us.

GUIDE. Is it not time that you sought the aid of Religion anew?

SECOND TOURIST. We need some great spiritual revival.

GUIDE. [*indicating the martyred Followers of The Light*] It has come!

THIRD TOURIST. Even this would not convince our people. Men and women have died for their faith since the dawn of civilisation.

GUIDE. And that is why the Torch of Truth has never been extinguished, and the Light of the Sun of Reality has never been wholly screened from the Earth.

THE DRAMA OF THE KINGDOM

FIRST TOURIST. Religion has no place in the Western world.

GUIDE. If your civilisation were perfect, if you were enjoying peace and prosperity, if justice reigned, if you were not in a state of social and moral confusion, then could I understand your lack of interest in Religion. But is it not true that you surely need some new focus for your faith, or as you might say in your Western metaphor, some new central Power Station to supply the starving churches with the current of Divine Electricity, a new dynamo to feed the social machine with the spiritual force which alone can save the world of mankind? You have the body of Progress, do you not need the Soul?

SECOND TOURIST. Would to God it might come to us!

GUIDE. Lift up your hearts! Behold the dawn of Salvation!

Faint music is heard as though coming from a great distance. It grows in volume. Voices of a heavenly choir sing, as shafts of radiant light rise from the still and shrouded forms. The sun rises. Before the choir becomes verbally distinct, the Angelus mingles with the music, and the voice of the Muadhdhin calls from a minaret, "Allah O Akbar!"

MUADHDHIN. Allah O Akbar! God is Most Great. From God do we come, and to God do we return! Praise be unto God!

HEAVENLY CHOIR.

Theirs is Life Eternal,
Those martyred saints who made
The sacrifice supreme;

Theirs the fragrance and beauty
Of the peaceful Garden of Heaven,
Theirs the freedom of birds
O'er the mountains and plains of God!

EPILOGUE

To the Sun of Truth
Their joyful souls are soaring
To the Sun from which they came !

CURTAIN.

The Western Student and the Eastern Student slowly advance towards one another, meet in the centre before the curtain, and exchange a holy salutation.

THE WESTERN STUDENT. [*addressing the Western World*]

A new name echoes through the world !
A new hope revives our dying faith !

EAST. The Name is the Lantern of God ;
The Light within is eternal !

WEST. Science, Religion, Philosophy,
Emerge from the ages of Darkness !

EAST. Our vision extends to the glory
Of the endless horizon of God !

The strain of the heavenly music is caught up by an orchestra of many instruments. As the light grows more brilliant, the two students descend from the stage and, walking through the midst of the audience, the Eastern Student leading, pass out of the theatre.

FINIS.

Information concerning the Bahai movement
can be obtained by writing to the Hon.
Secretary, The Bahai Library, 19, Grosvenor
Place, London, S.W.1.

